

FEMA REGION V

short notes on planning #9

POST-DISASTER MITIGATION PLANNING

Post-disaster mitigation planning is similar to pre-disaster mitigation planning, except that the community usually does not have a long period to gather data and study issues. Following a disaster, the immediate priority is likely to be recovering from the disaster. In the past, recovery was concurrent with mitigation project implementation. The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 will necessitate the following changes in your process.

The first important task may be to consider a temporary moratorium on building permits for repairs to allow the community to determine the areas in need of immediate mitigation action. Once target areas are identified, a longer moratorium may be enforced to allow time to complete the plan. In either case, the community should place a definite time limit on the moratorium.

If some of the structures in the target area are habitable, the community may wish to grant temporary repair permits. However, they should be careful not to grant permits that would compromise the opportunities for hazard mitigation.

The remainder of the mitigation planning process, which normally may take several months, may be compressed into as short a time period as a few weeks. Rather than relying on new studies of an area to determine hazards and the risks, assessments will be focused on previous studies and the area impacted by the recent disaster. After flooding, the flood of record may be used instead of differences between the base flood elevation and the actual elevation of the structure. After an earthquake, risk assessments may be based on the damage assessments completed following the event.

In post-disaster situations, communities may decide to divide the mitigation tasks into short-term and long-term solutions, with the most critical problems targeted as the short-term objectives. Mitigation decisions made in these situations may have to be made on the basis of the few options that will work in the short-term

instead of those that may be most effective over the long term. These decisions are often made quickly and under pressure rather than after and as a result of a comprehensive study and discussion.

In order to facilitate the immediate necessary mitigation actions, temporary housing for residents and temporary locations for businesses should be arranged. This will allow immediate access to stricken areas for mitigation action, for review and modification of building codes and/or for the preparation of cost benefit analyses and environmental reviews.

For additional information regarding post-disaster mitigation planning, contact the FEMA Publication Warehouse at 1-800-480-2520 to order a document entitled “Planning for Post-Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction.” If it is unavailable, you can purchase the document from the American Planning Association (APA). You may contact APA at 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60603. You may also e-mail APA at pasreports@planning.org. Be sure to ask for PAS Report 483/484.